



# Southeast Fishery Bulletin

National Marine Fisheries Service, Southeast Regional Office, 263 13<sup>th</sup> Avenue South, St. Petersburg, Florida 33701

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## FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

April 17, 2009  
FB09-026

## **NOAA SEEKS COMMENTS ON PROPOSED RULE TO ESTABLISH A FOUR MONTH CLOSED AREA IN THE GULF OF MEXICO COMMENT PERIOD ENDS MAY 4, 2009**

NOAA Fisheries Service is seeking public comment on a proposed rule that would establish a 4-month closure in an area in the Gulf of Mexico called "The Edges." During the January 1 through April 30 closure, all commercial and recreational fishing for and possession of fish managed by the Gulf of Mexico Fishery Management Council (Gulf Council) would be prohibited in the closed area except possession would be allowed when transiting the area with gear stowed in accordance with federal regulations. The boundaries of the closed area would be within lines drawn between the following coordinates:

- Northwest corner = 28° 51'N, 85° 16'W
- Northeast corner = 28° 51'N, 85° 04'W
- Southwest corner = 28° 14'N, 84° 54'W
- Southeast corner = 28° 14'N, 84° 42'W

The intent of the closure is to protect gag and other groupers during their respective spawning seasons. This measure is outlined in Amendment 30B to the Fishery Management Plan for the Reef Fish Resources of the Gulf of Mexico submitted by the Gulf Council. The proposed rule was published in the *Federal Register* on April 17, 2009, with the comment period ending May 4, 2009.

"The Edges" closure was originally included in the proposed rule for Amendment 30B. However that proposed rule contained an error relative to the "The Edges" seasonal-area closure, and the measure was removed from the Amendment 30B final rule. The closure provision has been revised to reflect the intent of Amendment 30B and is contained in this proposed rule.

### **Dates and Addresses**

Written comments must be received no later than 5 p.m., Eastern time, on May 4, 2009. You may submit comments by any of the following methods:

- Electronic Submissions: Federal e-Rulemaking Portal: <http://www.regulations.gov>. All comments received are part of the public record and will generally be posted to <http://www.regulations.gov> without change. All personal identifying information (for example, name, address, etc.) voluntarily submitted by the commenter may be publicly accessible. Do not submit confidential business information or otherwise sensitive or protected information. NOAA Fisheries Service will accept anonymous comments. To submit comments enter "NOAA-NMFS-2009-0098" in the keyword search and then select for the proposed rule "send a comment or submission." Attachments to electronic comments will be accepted in Microsoft Word, Excel, WordPerfect, or Adobe PDF file formats only.

- Mail: Peter Hood, Southeast Regional Office, NOAA Fisheries Service, 263 13th Avenue South, St. Petersburg, Florida 33701.

- Fax: 727-824-5308, Attention: Peter Hood.

The proposed rule is also available via the Internet at <http://www.gpoaccess.gov/fr/index.html> (do an advanced search under proposed rules for "page 17812"). Printed or electronic copies of the rule and Amendment 30B can be obtained from the Southeast Regional Office by contacting Peter Hood (see address above).

Comments must be received by May 4, 2009, to be considered by NOAA Fisheries Service in its decision on the final rule. All comments received by NOAA Fisheries Service specific to the proposed rule will be addressed in the final rule.

This bulletin provides only a summary of the information pertinent to the rule. Any discrepancies between this bulletin and the rule as published in the *Federal Register* will be resolved in favor of the *Federal Register*.